



**U.S. Department of Justice**

*United States Attorney  
District of Maryland*

*Thomas M. DiBiagio  
United States Attorney*

*Vickie E. LeDuc  
Public Information Officer*

*6625 United States Courthouse  
101 West Lombard Street  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201-2692*

*410-209-4800  
TTY/TDD: 410-962-4462  
410-209-4885  
FAX 410-962-3091  
Vickie.LeDuc@usdoj.gov*

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FOR FURTHER  
INFORMATION CONTACT  
VICKIE LEDUC, AUSA  
(410) 209-4885**

**HOME DEPOT SERIAL ARSONIST CHARGED**

BALTIMORE, Maryland - Thomas M. DiBiagio, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced that Derek Wesley Hall, Sr., age 33, of Elkton, Maryland, was arraigned yesterday for crimes committed in connection with a series of arsons occurring at Home Depot stores in Harford and Anne Arundel counties. A federal grand jury indicted Hall on October 14, 2003 in a 3 count indictment charging Hall with setting fires to Home Depot stores in Edgewood, Bel Air and Glen Burnie in August 2003.

According to an earlier criminal complaint filed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and Explosives (ATFE) in connection with the case, Hall was a former employee of Home Depot who had been terminated in March 2003. Hall was observed on security cameras in each of the stores shortly before the fires occurred. The fires occurred while the stores were open, forcing the evacuation of customers and employees.

In addition, the complaint alleges that Hall was observed at the site of another fire at a Home Depot store in Newark Delaware which was started by igniting a combustible liquid in the lumber aisle. A can of acetone with Hall's fingerprint was recovered from the Delaware fire scene. Hours after the Delaware fire occurred, a fire was set in the Bel Air Home Depot lumber aisle and an

identical can of acetone was recovered. Acetone is a special purpose thinner, cleaner and paint remover and is extremely flammable.

An indictment is not a finding of guilt. An individual charged by complaint is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at some later criminal proceedings.

Hall, if convicted, faces a maximum sentence of 20 years and a minimum mandatory of 5 years on each count and a \$250,000 fine, along with restitution. Trial has been set for December 15, 2003. Hall is also facing state charges in Delaware in connection with the fire occurring in Newark.

The case was investigated by ATF, the Maryland State Fire Marshal's Office, and investigators assigned to the Anne Arundel County Fire Department. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Angela R. White and Christopher J. Romano.